

Misleading Graphs A

- 1.** The following statements from the article attempt to make a connection between boys' behaviour and male role models but clearly do not put the blame for the increased poor behaviour on the decline in Male teachers

“Just 28 per cent of the state schoolteachers are men, down from 32 per cent 10 years ago. Youth crime has soared in that time. Sex attacks, robberies, assaults and weapon offences have risen significantly, and psychologists and family groups told the *Herald Sun* the loss of male role models was an important factor.”

These two statements are made by the Herald Sun at the beginning of the article. In summary the first statement says that the percentage of male teachers has decreased in the last 10 years. In the second statement we read that some types of youth crime have risen significantly. It may be true that there is a correlation but despite quoting psychologists and family groups, no evidence is offered to suggest that there is causation. We could just as easily say that house prices have increased at the same time that the percentage of male teachers declined, or that the increase in female teachers is related to the increase in youth crime.

“Adolescent psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg said the lack of male teachers was a major problem.”

A major problem for what? He doesn't attribute this reduction as a factor in the increase in male youth violence.

Ms Pike's spokesman disputed the presence of a link between youth crime and male teacher numbers.

“Promoting respectful behaviour through our “Respect in Schools’ program is designed to address these issues,” he said.

This is the only statement that addresses an implied link and rejects it.

John Morrissey, a part-time teacher, said solid, reliable male authority figures were vital to the development of boys and girls, particularly in no-father households.

Date: _____

John Morissey says that male role models are vital for both boys and girls but does not comment on any link to male crime. Note his use of the term role models includes other male figures not just teachers.

2. The new graph using values read from Figure 1.

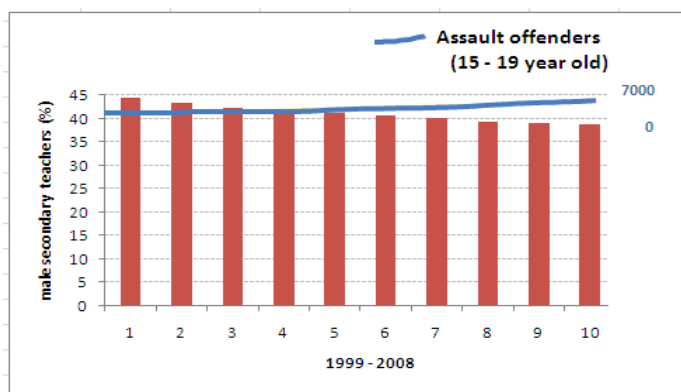


FIGURE 2 Male Assault and Male School Teachers

- 3.** Other reasons that could be associated and are referred to in the article are lack of male role models overall and lack of respectful behaviour. Other issues could be increase in violence on tv, less parental control and guidance etc.
- 4.** When the scale for the axis showing change in percentage of male teachers is expanded and begins at 0, the decrease in percentage appears much less dramatic over time. Similarly the rise in the line showing increase in male offenders is much less steep when its scale is compressed.
- 5.** Why does the information look different?
In the first graph, the restricted scale means we are only seeing part of the overall picture. Often when we are shown only part of a picture the information can look very different to when we see the whole.

- 6.** By using the restricted scale the graph seems to show a sharp increase in male crime at the same time as a sharp decrease in the percentage of male teachers. Note the graph cannot prove causation but might indicate an area for further work to see if one thing did cause another.